

Message Text

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SUBJECT: WILDCAT STRIKES MARCH 1-2

REF: (A) REYKJAVIK 251; (B) REYKJAVIK 0267

1. LEADERS OF ICELANDIC FEDERATION OF LABOR (IFL, CONSISTING OF UNIONS OF PRIVATE SECTOR) AND FEDERATION OF STATE AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES (BSRB, PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS) ARE URGING MEMBERS TO GO OUT ON GENERAL STRIKE MARCH 1-2 TO DEMONSTRATE OPPOSITION TO NEW ECONOMIC MEASURES (REF A). RALLY PLANNED FOR DOWNTOWN REYKJAVIK MARCH 1 AS SHOW OF SOLIDARITY.

2. IF SUCH A STRIKE RECEIVED WIDESPREAD SUPPORT, IT COULD HAVE MORE CRIPPLING EFFECT THAN EITHER PRIVATE OR PUBLIC SECTOR STRIKES WHICH OCCURRED DURING 1977; HOWEVER LABOR IS SHARPLY DIVIDED OVER THIS PROPOSED ACTION. SINCE STRIKE WOULD BE ILLEGAL, MANY UNIONS HAVE REFUSED TO ENCOURAGE THEIR MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN WALKOUT. IFL BRANCH IN EAST WILL STRIKE WHILE WEST-FJORDS BRANCH WILL NOT. UNION OF REYKJAVIK CITY EMPLOY-
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EES TELLING MEMBERS NOT TO STRIKE WHILE MUNICIPAL UNIONS IN SOME OTHER AREAS EXPECT TO BE OUT. BANK EMPLOYEES AND OFFICE WORKERS HAVE REJECTED STRIKE ACTION WHILE PRINTERS WILL CLOSE DOWN NEWSPAPERS (WHICH HAD ONLY JUST GOTTEN BACK TO NORMAL SINCE CONCLUSION OF JOURNALISTS' STRIKE FEBRUARY 24), AND PILOTS WILL HALT OPERATIONS OF LOFTLEIDIR, THOUGH REPORTEDLY ONLY

FOR MARCH 1.

3. CRAZY QUILT PATTERN OF STRIKES MADE EVEN MORE CONFUSING SINCE UNIONS AND FEDERATIONS ARE SPLIT INTERNALLY ON WHETHER TO ENCOURAGE WALKOUTS OR NOT. CHAIRMAN OF BSRB SUPPORTS FULL-SCALE STRIKE WHILE VICE CHAIRMAN URGES MEMBERS NOT TO COMMIT ILLEGAL ACTION. FURTHER, WHETHER OR NOT UNIONS SUPPORT STRIKE, INDIVIDUALS MAY CHOOSE TO WORK OR NOT. CASE IN POINT IS TEACHERS' UNION WHERE MANY CLASSES WILL BE WITHOUT TEACHERS THOUGH SCHOOL WILL THEORETICALLY REMAIN IN SESSION. GOI HAS TAKEN HARD LINE SAYING THAT STATE AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES WHO ARE NOT AT WORK WILL SUFFER HARSH FINANCIAL PENALTIES, AND THIS THREAT MAY HAVE SOME EFFECT IN MINIMIZING STRIKE ACTION BY PUBLIC WORKERS.

4. COMMENT: DISARRAY AMONG LABOR MAY BE ONLY TEMPORARY. THERE IS NM QUESTION THAT MARCH 1-2 ACTION WILL BE ILLEGAL, AND MANY WITHIN LABOR MOVEMENT WANT TO STICK TO LETTER OF LAW IN ORDER TO BE ON FIRMER GROUND IF AND WHEN LEGAL STRIKES ARE CALLED. UNIONS HAVE QUICKENED THE PACE FOR RENOUNCING LAST YEAR'S WAGE CONTRACTS THEREBY INCREASING THE LIKELIHOOD OF LEGAL STRIKE ACTIONS COMMENCING IN UPRIL.

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